

Review Paper

The Quad an Anti-Beijing Club (ABC) and its future trajectory: Is it important for Bangladesh?

Md. Saddam Hossain^{1*}, Md. Salman Hossain², Jobaida Gulshanara³ and Li Yun⁴

¹Institute of South Asian Studies, Sichuan University, China

²Independence Researcher, Bangladesh

³Department of Physical Education and Sports Science, Rajshahi University, Bangladesh

⁴School of language & Literature, Jiangxi Normal University, China

hossain.su2017@gmail.com

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Abstract

In this present time, the world is facing many political crises such as the US-China trade war; COVID-19, Vaccine domination and Russia-Ukraine war are the most prominent. A different topic, known as Quad, is currently being discussed in international politics. What is the future of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, sometimes known as the Quad, and how was it established to achieve dominance or capture? And why is Bangladesh and other developing nations' participation vital. In order to better understand the Quad and its future course, this essay also tries to emphasize how crucial it is for Bangladesh to participate. Additionally, determining Bangladesh's interests in the Quad, the capabilities Bangladesh can contribute, and formulating participation are other crucial lines of inquiry. The results indicate that Bangladesh's capacity limits its potential Quad engagement, and that its faster-growing economic contributions would be capability-focused, such as raising maritime awareness and fostering consensus in the consultative process through Bangladeshi diplomacy.

Keywords: Quad, Soft power, Diplomacy, International relation, Geo-politics.

Introduction

In the modern world, a variety of factors, such as geographical impact and political and economic empowerment, are heavily weighted. In the meanwhile, how is Bangladesh's participation in or interest in the Quad, often known as the Anti-Beijing Club (ABC). As a recent neighbor country, China and Bangladesh have one of the strongest and most cordial relationships. There is also an example of a contract that has been signed between these two nations. One of South Asia's middle-income developing nations, Bangladesh shares borders with India, Myanmar and the Bay of Bengal in south¹.



Figure-1: A geographic perspective of the Indo-Pacific².

But because of the ABC, the latest situation between these two nations is not typical. The first official Quad summit between Japan, the United States, India, and Australia took place in 2007, and it served as the foundation for both a single maritime exercise and a single tabletop exercise. The "Core Group" of these four nations was first established during the coordinated response to the Boxing Day tsunami in 2004³. The initial version of the Quad was founded on this cooperation, and it convened for a brief while in 2007 before dissolving in 2008. Eight more years of regional instability, however, resulted in an increasing convergence in the four countries' foreign policies, with an emphasis on securing an open and free Indo-Pacific, working together to combat terrorism, and advancing a rules-based system. As a result, the Quad was revived in 2017 and started meeting every two months. Shinzo Abe, the prime minister of Japan, first envisioned the Quad in his "Confluence of the Two Seas" speech, which laid the ideological and geographical groundwork for the alliance³. Indeed, this ideological and geographical division has inevitably given rise to conflicting assumptions about the purpose and future of the Quad, including that it is the beginning of an "ABC," a network to check China's rise, or simply a disjointed collection of nations that will never come together around a single strategic goal.

15 years after the initial Quad debates in the wake of the tsunami and two years following its 2017 reconvening, the alliances of ABC, which is the American Leadership Project

(ALP), attempted to study these bumper-sticker ideas in detail³. The study team wanted to get a wide picture of elite perspectives in the Quad countries, particularly regarding the mission of the Quad and its upcoming activities, so they conducted a “temperature-taking” poll. The Quad was operating and moving quietly in response to its operations. But because of western anti-China groups, the problem of the Russia-Ukraine war is receiving a common platform. China is the only nation that supports Russia directly, which is squarely at odds with the west. The questions about the purpose of this paper are developing as a country like Bangladesh joins Quad. On these topics, such as how much Bangladesh will gain or how crucial it is for Bangladesh to join the Quad, there are numerous points of contention.

Literature Review

The effects of the ‘Quad’ and the ‘Anti-Quad’ on international relations: Core country and their geo-political condition: Geographical characteristics, particularly its size and distance, have been used to characterize and define the U.S. Pacific Command’s (USPACOM) and its military plans in the Indo-Pacific area. According to the USPACOM’s records, its area of responsibility (AoR) “encompasses about half the earth’s surface, extending from the Antarctic to the North Pole and from the oceans off the U.S. west coast to the western boundary of India”⁴. In 2015, 83 percent of the INDOPACOM AoR was made up of water, while 17 percent was made up of land⁴. In 2018, the combatant command expanded with the inclusion of India, which led to the renaming of USPACOM as USINDOPACOM. The sort of American military assets and capabilities in the Indo-Pacific AoR has historically been influenced by the size and maritime geography of the region.

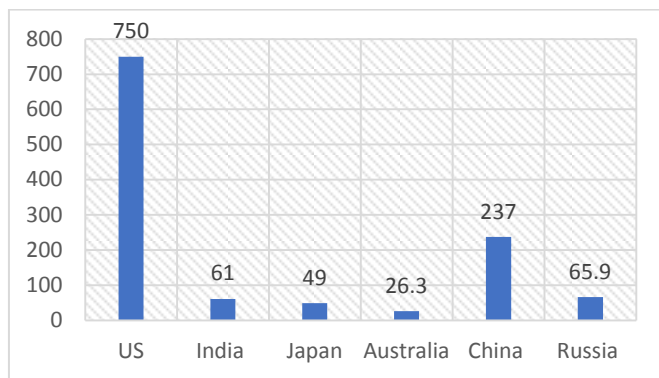


Figure-4: Defense spending Quad and anti-Quad (Billion USD)⁵.

U.S. authorities started to reevaluate strategic priorities and force posture in response to rising Chinese power and ambitions in the region, and they started making steps to shift focus to the Indo-Pacific region. “Sustaining U.S. Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Leadership” was published in 2012, during the Obama administration, and it made a strong case for continued US leadership and China’s decline from global leadership⁶.

The relaxation of this requirement led to significant reductions in the ground forces, including around 22,000 Marines and 80,000 active-duty soldiers from the Army⁶. The policy merely called for modest adjustments to the naval force structure.

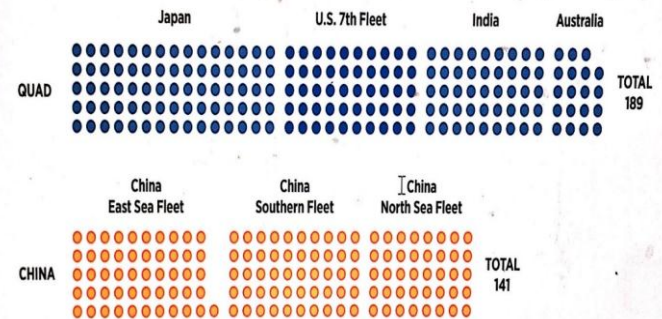


Figure-5: Chinese and Quad Naval Forces in the Indo-Pacific⁷.

In addition, other nations have enough influence in international politics. In the Indo-Pacific area, the Quad members (the US and India) are engaged in fierce conflict. The US spends roughly 750 billion USD annually, China comes in second place with about 237 billion USD, and the other Quad countries collectively spend about 136.3 billion USD, according to the WPR (2022)⁸. On the other side, China has 141 naval forces in the Indo-Pacific region, which are grouped into three sectors, including the China East Sea Fleet, China Southern Fleet, and China North Sea Fleet⁸. The overall number of Quad members, including Japan, the US 7th Fleet, India, and Australia, is 189. These three Chinese naval fleets, however, are only active in the Indo-Pacific, whereas the US Navy is spread out all over the world. The only US fleet in charge of the Indo-Pacific is the 7th fleet. The Quad’s combined naval force in the Indo-Pacific, however, surpasses China’s when combined with the navies of Australia, Japan, and India⁸.

China’s Geo-economic and foreign diplomacy: With an annual growth rate of 2.3 percent, China’s economy is the second largest in the world⁹. China’s economy is booming after the US-China trade conflict like a zymotic form¹⁰. It is true that China will engage with the rest of the world through strategic investments in industries like building, agriculture, and technology augmentation. China has an excellent reputation for its low interest single system outside.

Table-2: Unemployment rate of Quad members¹¹.

Name of the country	Unemployment rate
Australia	3.9%
India	4.8%
Japan	2.9%
United States	3.6%

China had already conducted systematic work on the infrastructure in several nations across the world. Additionally, China is the top user of economic tools like trade, loans, investment, tourism, etc., and has shown a readiness to use them coercively to further its strategic goals of securing energy supplies and strengthening its capacity for power projection¹⁰.

In addition, there is a significant geo-economics dispute between China and the US. One indication of it is the recent trade battle between the US and China. However, in the Indo-Pacific area, China is ahead of the US in terms of economic investment.¹⁰

Prior to China overtaking the US as the largest economy in 2014, its GDP (in PPP) more than tripled in that time¹⁴. While the two nations have fought for that distinction over the previous few years, it surpassed the US as the world's largest trading nation in 2013 and has since increased its dominance over the US in regional commerce¹⁵. Chinese tourists spent 260 billion USD abroad in 2016, more than any other country's total. Additionally, Xi Jinping has pledged to invest and loan more than 1 trillion USD for his Belt and Road initiative (BRI), which will touch nearly 70 nations¹⁵. This portfolio will only expand as emerging nations reliance on Chinese goods and infrastructure financing grows. China trades with the other countries of the Quad in large amounts, according to the profile on economic solvency.

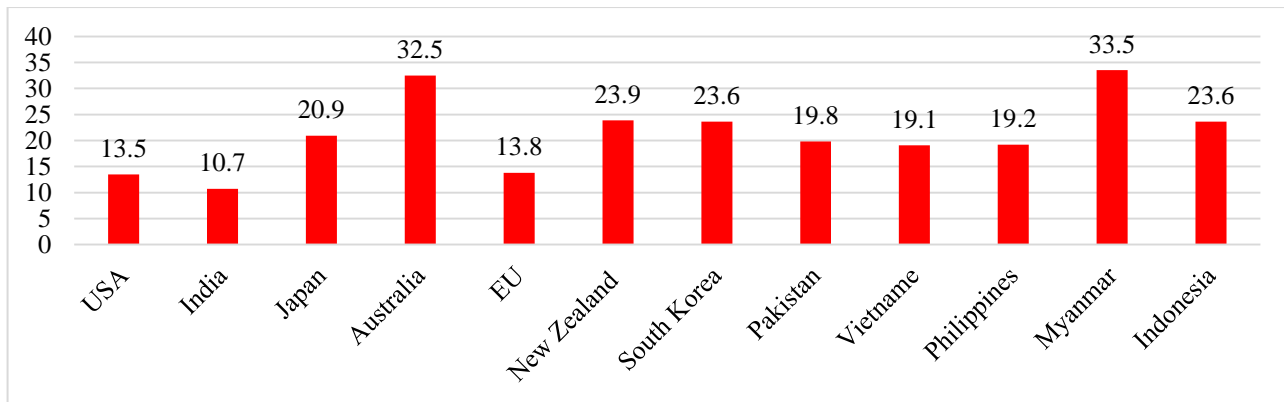


Figure-6: Geo-economy and China's international trade¹².

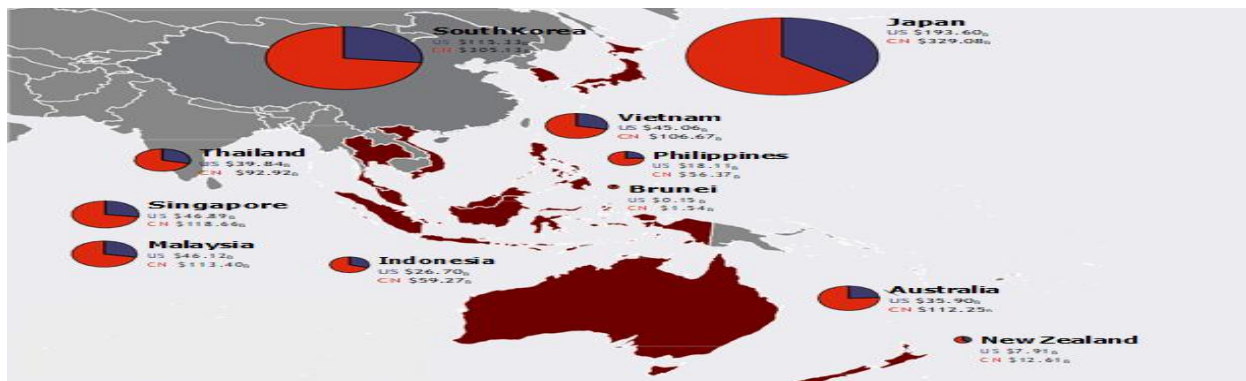


Figure-7: Asian trade: US vs China¹³.

Table-3: The Quad member's annual trade with China¹⁶.

Name of the country	Total amount of trade	Amount with QM	Amount with China	Amount with China (%)
Australia	457b.	38b. US	168b.	37
India	643b.	81b. US	88b.	14
Japan	1.3t.	187b. US	318b.	25
US	3.8t.	305b. A,I,J	589b.	15

Note: QM: Quad Member, b: Billion, t: Trillion, A,I,J: Australia, India, Japan.

However, Beijing has shown a readiness to creatively and coercively use every economic tool at its disposal, including restricting Norwegian salmon exports and forbidding Chinese tour groups from traveling to South Korea to protest deployment¹⁷. Beijing divides its use of economic influence into five categories: latent, exclusionary, active, passive, and coercive. As part of China's economic and market strategy, continued relations with foreign parties will be cordial and conducive to their mutual advantage. Even nevertheless, this regulation applies to all kinds of industries and not just to foreign trade. In order to continue the adoption of other nations with China-friendly circumstances or political stances by the countries, active leverage involves a more direct role, utilizing that favorable and easy policy power on BRI investment. According to this typology, China's trade diplomacy mostly resides at the tipping point between passive and active leverage, depending on¹⁸. Some nations that are heavily indebted to China may be aware of how much Beijing's goodwill and debt forgiveness depend on their economies and take deliberate steps to embrace China-friendly policies.

Bangladesh Prospective: The future trajectory of the quad

Bangladesh currently faces a number of domestic, regional, and global difficulties as a result of its geographic location. The Rohingya refugee crisis is one of the main concerns for the countries, but Bangladesh is generally dealing with a variety of other issues as well¹⁷. In this instance, Bangladesh only shares borders with two other nations and is connected to three other world regions. Bangladesh shares a 4096.7-kilometer border with India, which is more than 80% of its own border¹⁹. Bangladesh's significance has grown greatly in the geostrategic and geopolitical equations that are developing in the Indo-Pacific as a result of its strategically crucial geographic location and closeness to the Bay of Bengal.

Bangladesh has key needs in the region due to its geographic location, and as a result, the White House Speakman has mentioned and identified Bangladesh as a hotspot for merging with Quad 2.0/plus¹⁰. The anti-Quad, on the other hand, views Bangladesh as a crucial strategic partner in its BRI. China's enterprises are active in a range of construction initiatives. The Chinese ambassador's remark can be seen as Beijing's well-planned effort to block any future chances of Bangladesh joining with ABC.

If Bangladesh joins the Quad, it will be a major blow to China's efforts to encircle South Asia politically. The Chinese ambassador's warning, meantime, came as Dhaka was frantically attempting to purchase the COVID-19 vaccine, including from China, following the Indian government's restriction on vaccine exports to Bangladesh in 2021¹⁹. Meanwhile, China gave Bangladesh 500,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine as a gift in May 2021²⁰. And according to Bangladeshi authorities, the two nations strong friendship has

led Bangladesh to desire to purchase 40 to 50 million doses of the Covid-19 vaccine by the end of the month of December.²⁰ Additionally, Bangladesh and Myanmar work well together to address regional issues, such as the Rohingya refugee crisis, and find long-term solutions¹⁸. Bangladesh China also performs well in global trade and economics. China and Bangladesh have numerous agreements in place to improve their economies and infrastructure. China has a direct or indirect financial and technical support role in the majority of Bangladesh's megaprojects, including the Karnaphuli Tunnel, Dhaka Subway, Padma Bridge, and Padma Rail Link (which is one of the issues facing the current Bangladeshi government)²¹.

Additionally, there is anti-Quad activity in Bangladesh's power industries, including the Russian-built Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, Payra Thermal Power Plant, Matarbari Power Plant, etc.²¹

In another instance, US economic and political sanctions and hostility make other countries poorer and poorer over time. On July 8, 2022, Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina denounced US economic sanctions related to the Russia-Ukraine conflict and mentioned how the US lacked effective control over any issues²¹. The Prime Minister added that the conflict between the two countries, which violates human rights, is causing pain among people around the world. The US was also urged by the prime minister to avoid punishing one nation at the expense of another. As a result of US sanctions against its security forces (RAB), Bangladesh²¹.

Bangladesh-China-India relations as paradox: The relationship between Bangladesh, China, and India is currently somewhat out of balance, which is challenging Bangladesh's foreign policy greatly. The cordial relations between Bangladesh and China in 1974 caused minimal upheaval in India. Recently, Bangladesh and China have become economic partners, while India is losing its appeal to the Bangladeshi market. Free trade has been urged by the foreign minister of Bangladesh, although it has not yet been put into practice. Ready-made clothing from Bangladesh must be exported to India with a 16% countervailing levy.

The mainstream media of Bangladesh will eventually be broadcast in India, according to the Bangladesh Foreign Ministry. One of the major issues for Bangladesh is the illegal and unregulated trade between Bangladesh and India²².

The market in China is becoming more flexible and tariff-free for Bangladeshi industries. Foreign policy was regionally developed during the first term of the Modi administration, but he now emphasizes the importance of the "Look East" policy²³. South Asian nations did not, therefore, receive top emphasis in Indian foreign policy. In Bangladesh-India ties, the problem of water is also quite important. Although the Teesta dispute between the two nations is still under negotiation, India has internal conflicts related to the Teesta issue²⁴.

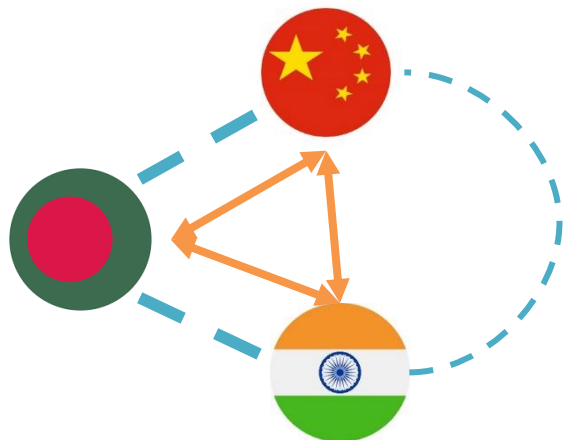


Figure-8: Bangladesh-China-India relationship paradox.

Let's discuss some hard power since it is relevant to comprehending why India misinterprets Bangladesh. India is wary about Bangladesh because Bangladesh is purchasing weapons and submarines. Former service chief and admiral of the Indian Navy described it as "a challenge for India and the maritime security paradigm"²⁵. According to the foreign ministry, China is selling submarines to Bangladesh in an effort to encircle India, and the market-making concept is crucial to the bilateral relationship between China and Bangladesh. Bangladesh has a sizable population despite its small size. Bangladesh is a good market for a variety of products, technology, and weapons, and Bangladesh has welcomed China to sell its submarines and weapons to Bangladesh²⁶. Presently, Bangladesh was the world's second-largest importer of Chinese weapons in 2015, behind only Myanmar. Currently, 71% of Chinese weapons are sold in Myanmar, Pakistan, and Bangladesh¹⁰. China exports weapons and submarines, thus Chinese personnel are also present in Bangladesh to service the machinery. China is funding the Bangladesh China India Corridor (BCIM), which is a great move for expanding the market²⁷. China and Bangladesh continue to have a solid defense and development relationship. International researchers claim that Bangladesh is playing a dual role. However, representatives of the Bangladeshi administration make it clear that Bangladesh maintains cordial relations with all nations. As a result, it was unable to determine whether an international relationship should be closer to or farther from the boundary.

Methodology

The study was based on both primary and secondary data, which included a number of book chapters, academic journals, newspapers, internet notes, etc. and some data gathered from various international reports.

Limitations, research gap and further scope of study: The study's few flaws are minor. First, the study was entirely based on both the most significant statistics and secondary data, while

it would be better to solely base it on the data that is most relevant. Second, it was previously impossible to draw a firm judgment from the pattern size. Thirdly, only primary data were used in the procedure.

Conclusion

Many recent events, including the assassination of Japan's former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Boris Johnson's forced resignation from parliament, and the civil conflict in India, among others, have raised concerns for the countries that are willingly or unwillingly members of the Quad. However, due to the US-China trade war, the Indo-Pacific area may experience polarization in the future; much like it did during the Cold War. This possibility has received a lot of attention in 2018 and 2019. President Biden correctly noted that the world had reached a "inflection point"—a standoff between the defenders of democracy and a realistic, functional autocratic system—during the Munich Security Conference in 2021. The Indo-Pacific region should be free and open, and it should be consolidated by a rules-based system, according to the Quad. Beijing has demonstrated that the ideal democratic system the Quad advocates is not the only one that is successful for the world through the appeal of its soft power and by using its economy as an example. Smaller states in South and Southeast Asia will be the most vulnerable. Any indication that they would join the Quad may result in worsening bilateral ties with China as a result. This most recently applied to Bangladesh, when the Chinese ambassador claimed that joining the informal group would harm relations between Dhaka and Beijing, despite the absence of any sign of a formal invitation from Quad members. The Chinese have continued to impose economic measures against Australia after they requested that the World Health Organization look into the origins of COVID-19. The responses show that you are either in favor of the Quad or against China. Smaller countries must therefore exercise extreme caution in their handling of this matter because they have little space for diplomatic maneuver.

Bangladesh is attempting to strike a balance in its diplomatic relations with China and India. By demonstrating how China's soft power is used and has an impact in Bangladesh, this study has come to a conclusion. Although there are numerous discussions about the Quad issue and Bangladesh's ability to resolve it should sanctions be imposed on that country, The Bangladeshi government is nonetheless optimistic about China's projection of soft power in Bangladesh. because China committed to grant Bangladesh 24 billion USD in 2016, mostly as a line of credit for 24 projects, during President Xi Jinping's visit. The government of Bangladesh views China as a friend as well and works to maintain harmonious relations. Bangladesh will benefit from China's revival under President Xi. On the other side, Bangladesh and India have always had positive relations, but as time has gone on, Bangladesh has adopted a policy of peace and a foundation of equality and friendliness in the world community.

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